

defiant behaviour. If this is in any way marked or persistent, the child needs special psychological help, and the mother, nurse or teacher is wise to realise this and to consult either a child guidance clinic or a medical psychoanalyst. I need not, therefore, say more about such cases (undoubtedly exemplified in some of the letters quoted, e.g., pp. 137, 148). Taking, then, the sexual behaviour of ordinary children, children who show no, special persistence or defiance about it, but an ordinary measure of naivety in, say, the third to the fifth years, and an ordinary degree of guilt and secrecy in the years over five, let us now consider how it is best to deal with this.

(a) *Masturbation*

In my theoretical discussion of the meaning of masturbation, I have already said enough to indicate the general lines I would advocate. Direct reproaches or prohibitions are undoubtedly unwise. If one remembers that masturbation is only a symptom of unconscious conflict with regard to the parents, and that even in its milder forms it very largely springs from anxiety connected with the primitive sadistic phantasies, one can then understand that a mere direct prohibition of the act itself is of very little help to the child. On the other hand, it is equally clear that the indirect influence of an environment which gives ample opportunities for sublimatory activities, and ample reassurance by real social experience with mild parents and the companionship of other children, is the best help against masturbatory activity. It is not only unwise to reproach or scold the child, but quite unnecessary. If the child has plenty of play materials and occupations suited to his age, if he has a satisfactory social life with other children, either in a large family or a nursery school, if his parents prove their

goodness to him
by showing him how to develop skills and arts
and understanding, the need to get physical reassurance
in his own
body by masturbation will gradually pass away.
The development of real skill and the experience of real
social life are the
best aid to the child's inner security; and with
increasing inner security masturbation largely disappears.

(b) *Exhibitionism and Open Sexual Play*

This, too, is best dealt with by indirect
methods. Straight-
forward but mild prohibitions, on the lines, "
It's better not